

Bo Phut

1

A linen white sky.
 debris on the beach, Bo Phut.
 coconut palm trees in an afternoon squall,
 the serrated long fringe of their arms.

Have you ever been there?

I write letters to friends wanting to get it right.
 everything,
 all of it down on paper
 for their eyes to see, their ears to hear the international chatter:
 French children, German men & women, later Swedish girls.

I come away with images, sounds, textures
 and tastes of spicy Thai seafood and curry
 and small bowls, saucers, hot sauce;

have you heard about the boy who drinks tabasco?

I try to write it all down for you in another country, your own.

2

How to get it right,
 that sense of being on the beach all day,
 the faded striped canvas of beach chairs and the water green.
 I draw a self-portrait of brown limbs, white sand, the bluest sky.

Painterly images lost
 in a painting on a kitchen wall.
 the sense of a large straw hat
 worn by someone obscured by it
 and the sandy aqua-blues,
 the watery blue sky, the dry acrylic azure.

Portraits I paint of myself are faceless
 as if foreign countries have no mirrors.

How to get it right: the sense of looking, not looking
but being in the presence of your undressed limbs all day,
an unfamiliar place.
alone with yourself.

3

*Have you ever been there when the beach curves
out, out to the point where the rocks are rainbow-splashed,
henna-ed perhaps?*

the rocks and water in a different light.
I think of Paul Theroux on a train somewhere
writing the difference between travel writing and fiction.
I have been to that country of difference.
where we travel each minute is a fiction of luxury and fact.
I come away with a body I don't know.
the luxury of travel is to be the senses
with graceful easy concentration.
fiction of a selfish kind: this country's centre is here
until I believe it
I have been to that country of difference
but I could not stay long.

Deirdre Dwyer